



## PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

July 2009

### HEALTH

#### **Afghan Pharmaceutical Company Achieves ISO**

#### **9001:2000 Certification:**

As more quality health products are made available to the Afghan population, maternal and childhood mortality rates continue to decrease. The United States Government supports the Afghan pharmaceutical manufacturers in producing these high-quality, affordable health products for the local market. One USAID-supported company, Khalid Irshad Pharmaceuticals (KIP), is now manufacturing the Abpakon brand of chlorinated water treatment solutions and the Shefa brand of oral rehydration salts in three different flavors. In May, KIP obtained ISO 9001:2000 certification, becoming the first Afghan pharmaceutical company to achieve this level of international quality standards.



Khalid Irshad Pharmaceutical personnel producing Shefa oral rehydration salts.

PHOTO: USAID/COMPRI-A

KIP has shown other companies in Afghanistan's fledgling pharmaceutical sector how small investments in quality assurance and control and production can bring about big achievements – both in improving the health of the Afghan people and stimulating growth in the pharmaceutical industry. In early 2010, KIP will begin to conduct quality assurance workshops for other Afghan pharmaceutical companies to increase the quality of locally produced products to international standards. Additionally, the Ministry of Public Health (MoPH) is subcontracting KIP to perform quality testing services.



Former Deputy Mission Director Chuck Drilling hands a laptop to an Afghan student.

PHOTO: USAID/Afghanistan

### ECONOMIC GROWTH

#### **2,000 Laptop Computers Placed in Kabul Schools:**

On June 21, the One Laptop per Child (OLPC) program continued its expansion throughout Afghanistan by distributing 2,000 laptop computers to four Kabul-area schools. The computers, given to students in grades four through six, are equipped with internet connectivity, educational software, and a small business tutorial and market information toolkit provided by the USAID.

The One Laptop per Child program has been very successful in other parts of Afghanistan. In March 2009, OLPC Afghanistan's first laptop distribution provided 400 computers to students in the eastern city of Jalalabad. Now, the computers are used



## PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

July 2009

constantly by students, teachers, and parents. In a sign of local enthusiasm for the program, the parents requested summer school training courses, both for their children and for themselves. These laptops are broadening the horizons of all participants, connecting Afghan students to the rest of the world.

**Southern-based IIFCs Offer Medical Services to Members:** In late July, the Nangarhar and Helmand Islamic Investment and Finance Cooperatives (IIFCs) began providing medical services to their members. Hundreds of IIFC members in the two provinces received consultation and treatment at the clinics, each of which employs two doctors, one male and one female, and one nurse.

IIFCs are community-based, member-owned institutions that provide a range of Islam-compliant financial services to their members. Community-outreach programs, such as providing medical services to IIFC members, are funded by a small fee credit union members pay in the process of repaying their loans. IIFC members determine how they will use these proceeds – intended to be used for charitable purposes – to serve community needs. This further strengthens the relationship between the local members and the IIFCs, leading to the long-term sustainability of IIFC financial services. Twenty-eight IIFCs and points of service are currently operating in 11 provinces reaching over 37,000 members.



An IIFC member receives medical services.  
PHOTO: USAID/ARIES

**Mortgage Law and Movable Property Law Increase Access to Finance:** Mortgage lending in Afghanistan has been long constrained because of a poor legal framework. Financing was available to only a small fraction of the population and banks were unable to improve yields on larger loan portfolios. On June 8, President Karzai signed and enacted the Law on Immovable Property in Banking Transactions, which governs mortgages, following its passage by Parliament. The law was drafted by the Da Afghanistan Bank Office of General Council in consultation with the Afghanistan Banks Association and USAID-funded technical advisors.

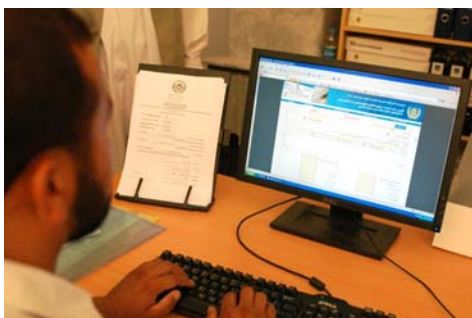
The Mortgage Law presents exciting financing opportunities and will open new doors for banks, home owners, businesses, and investors in Afghanistan's economy. Even a modest increase in home sales and home mortgages will have a positive multiplier effect on the industrial, service, and consumer goods sectors, leading to higher levels of employment, per capita income, and tax revenue.



## PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

July 2009

The President and Parliament also passed the Secured Transactions Law for Movable Property, which governs bank financing, long term leases, vendor sales and consignment sales of movable property. Implementation will broaden access to financing and allow banks and other credit providers to expand their portfolios. The law will also protect collateral rights and improve enforcement in the event of a default, while protecting the interests of borrowers. The passage of these two laws shows that Afghanistan is on its way to developing a modern legal framework for property ownership and sales.



The computerized business registration system in use at the Jalalabad branch of the Afghanistan Central Business Registry.

PHOTO: USAID/Afghanistan

### **Afghanistan Central Business Registry Launched in Jalalabad:**

Small and medium businesses are the backbone of economic growth in many countries, including Afghanistan. To enable small businesses to legally register and thrive, the Ministry of Commerce and Industry recently opened the first provincial Central Business Registry Office in Jalalabad with the support of USAID. The new office provides businesses with the opportunity to complete all steps of the registration process in one location.

Additionally, the new computerized registry system helps to bring Afghanistan's business registration practices up to international standards. It is one more step that the Ministry of Commerce and Industry is

taking to create a healthy business environment and support Afghan enterprises in the country's provinces.

"Afghan businessmen will be able to register their businesses faster, cheaper, and easier," said Minister of Commerce and Industry Wahidullah Shahrani. "This process that used to take several days has been reduced to a few hours and has resulted in greater transparency, reduced corruption, and increased efficiency." Nangarhar Governor Gul Agha Sherzai also welcomed the new office and added, "The establishment of the Central Business Registry in Jalalabad will make it easier for those businesses that had to wait up to two weeks or travel to Kabul to register."

**Loan Helps Support the Licit Agriculture Sector in Hilmand:** On July 22, the Afghanistan Rural Finance Company (ARFC) approved a \$200,000 loan to an Afghan company in Hilmand Province. The company assists Hilmand farmers with growing paprika, establishing orchards, and introducing new agricultural technology on their farms.

USAID established ARFC to create commercial opportunities for agricultural and other rural enterprises in Afghanistan. Hilmand, which is a major producer of illicit drugs, is one of the most insecure and unstable provinces in Afghanistan. Access to credit provides alternative



## PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

July 2009

livelihood opportunities to poppy growers and will have a positive impact on the overall security and stability of the region. As of June 2009, over \$1 million has been disbursed in Hilmand. Eighty-six percent of this amount has directly funded farmers and agro-enterprises.

**Jalalabad-based Feed Mill Continues to Thrive:** The Sabawoon Poultry Feed Mill, started over one year ago with the help of a grant from USAID, continues to produce quality feed in demand by chicken farmers. Located in Jalalabad, the mill has several contracts with local poultry farms, and recently signed a contract to supply the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) with 250 tons of chicken feed. USAID's assistance to Sabawoon is a successful example of a grant that enabled a business to purchase needed machinery. With that equipment, Sabawoon has helped alleviate a critical bottleneck in an agricultural supply chain. The business has since become self-sustaining, continuing to win new, larger contracts as it meets the large domestic demand for a product that once had to be imported.

### AGRICULTURE

**Afghanistan Dedicates Band-e-Amir National Park:** On June 18, Bamyan Governor Dr. Habiba Sarobi dedicated Band-e-Amir National Park in central Afghanistan. Vice President Karim Khalili; National Environmental Protection Agency Director-General Prince Mostapha Zaher; Minister of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock Asif Rahimi; U.S. Ambassador Karl Eikenberry; citizens of Bamyan; and NGO representatives gathered at Band-e-Amir's pristine lakes to celebrate this important step towards protecting Afghanistan's environment. The dedication is the result of years of effort on behalf of the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, including the passage of the Environmental Law in 2007 and the park's official establishment on April 22.



Ambassador Eikenberry, Vice President Khalili, Governor Sarobi, and Prince Zaher cut the ribbon to dedicate Band-e-Amir.

PHOTO: USAID/Sarah Siegel

The centerpiece of Band-e-Amir is a series of six clear, azure-blue lakes in an austere setting of high-altitude red limestone cliffs. Covering 59,000 hectares, the park's combination of desert, water, and rock make for landscapes that should be preserved for future generations. Since 2006, the United States Government and the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) have been working with the Government of Afghanistan and local communities surrounding Band-e-Amir to establish the national park and develop a park management plan. Now, park management is directed by the Band-e-Amir Protected Area Committee (BAPAC), a government/community collaborative body that enables local residents to provide input into the management of their land.



## PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

July 2009

The national park and expected growth in domestic and international tourism will lead to increased economic development in the Band-e-Amir area.

Band-e-Amir and Bamyan Province are secure areas in Afghanistan, and environmentally friendly hotels and restaurants are under construction to meet the needs of future visitors. The growth of the tourism industry will improve the lives and income potential for local residents, reducing their dependence on subsistence agriculture.



A pristine lake at Band-e-Amir National Park.

PHOTO: USAID/Sarah Siegel



Women in Parwan dry apricots and onions in locally made solar dryers.

PHOTO: USAID/AWATT

**Solar Dryers Preserve Fruit and Raise Women's Incomes:** In Parwan Province, women entrepreneurs in nine communities are producing nutritious dried fruits and vegetables thanks to solar dryers provided by USAID. Indirect solar dryers retain more of the crops' nutritional content and minimize discoloration when compared to direct sun drying – ultimately producing a healthier, more marketable food. The solar dryers are made from local materials and built by Afghan carpenters, further bolstering the local economy. To date, women's groups have ordered 18 solar dryers, which they are now using to add value to their crops.

### PROVINCIAL RECONSTRUCTION TEAM

**Villagers Work Together to Stop Flooding:** When the heavy spring rains came this year, the community of Gozar-e Shahrak (a sub-district of Mazari Sharif) was badly affected by flooding. To assist the residents, USAID sponsored a ditch-excavation project to channel water along main streets and prevent future floods. Twenty-five workers earned an income for their participation in the project, during which they dug 2,400 meters of a drainage ditch. More importantly, the community itself contributed to the project by raising funds to buy 115 pipe culverts and the cement to place them. The culverts were installed at intersections along the main street to allow



Gozar-e Shahrak residents dig a drainage ditch to prevent future flooding.

PHOTO: USAID/FIRUP



## PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

July 2009

water to flow along the full stretch of the canal. Through support from USAID and the local community, residents of Gozar-e Shahrak are now safe from future flooding.

### DEMOCRACY AND GOVERNANCE

#### **Religious Scholars Promote the Democratic Process:**

Building a strong, inclusive civil society in Afghanistan requires the participation and support of diverse communities, including its religious leaders. In particular, the Ulema (religious scholars) are a vital component of Afghan society, and their opinions are very influential. As traditional agents of change at the local level, Ulema can educate followers and eliminate misperceptions held by the general public regarding civil society, the government, and women's rights.

Throughout the spring and summer, USAID and Counterpart International conducted and aired six radio roundtables with Ulema to discuss civil society, democracy, women's role in society, and the upcoming elections. RTA Radio One broadcast the roundtables, which reached audiences in Afghanistan's 34 provinces.

During the roundtable held on June 22, the invited scholars emphasized the importance of public participation in a fair and transparent election. One of the participants, Mawlawi Mohammed Sediq, explained, "Prophet Mohammed set an excellent precedent for Muslims by not choosing his successor but letting his followers elect his successor by majority consent." The invited Ulema also mentioned that both eligible men and women have equal rights to vote. Opinions such as Mr. Sediq's have reached many of his fellow citizens through radio, supporting democracy and the growth of a strong civil society in Afghanistan.



Ulema discuss democracy and elections during a radio roundtable.

PHOTO: USAID/IPACS

### EDUCATION

#### **Strengthening Nursing Education in Afghanistan:**

From June 28-29, Kabul Medical University (KMU) held a conference to develop the academic policies for Bachelors of Science Nursing programs in Afghanistan. Currently, KMU operates the only Bachelors in Nursing program in the country.

Following the opening ceremony, where speakers stressed the importance of attracting more women to nursing degree programs, attendees participated in working groups to craft academic policies. Later, participants toured the USAID-funded Nursing Skills Lab, which gives nursing students practical experience in a controlled setting.



Conference participants tour the Nursing Skills Lab at Kabul Medical University.

PHOTO: USAID/AeQA



## PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

July 2009

A follow up workshop to develop the standards for a Bachelor of Science in Nursing in Afghanistan will occur later this summer. The policies and standards developed through these two workshops provide the basis for establishing national standards for Bachelor of Science degrees in Nursing programs for all higher education universities in Afghanistan. These programs will produce professional nurses with strong theoretical backgrounds and practical experience, leading to improved patient care in Afghanistan's hospitals and clinics.



An MPPA student defends his thesis.

PHOTO: USAID/AeQA

### **Masters in Public Policy and Administration Students Defend Their Theses:**

During the final week of May, four students from the first cohort of the Kabul University (KU) Masters in Public Policy and Administration (MPPA) program successfully defend their theses. The students were nominated by their employers – nearly all Afghan governmental organizations – to participate in the MPPA program, one of only three graduate degrees offered at KU after a 30-year interruption in graduate degree-granting programs.

The oral defense, in front of the three-member thesis committee, KU staff and faculty, USAID staff, and fellow students, was the culmination of an 18-month process. "I will always be grateful to USAID...for this opportunity to advance, not only myself, but my country by being so much better-prepared to fulfill my job obligations at the Civil Service Institute," said one successful candidate. Additional students from this cohort are expected to complete and defend their theses in the next several months, followed by a graduation ceremony.

## INFRASTRUCTURE

### **Promoting the Sustainable Use of Water Resources:**

Proper management of water resources is essential for the continued growth of Afghanistan's agriculture sector, which employs approximately 80% of the population. Additionally, the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan is working to provide clean drinking water for its citizens, and to ensure that industrial water use facilitates continued economic growth without wasting vital resources.

To coordinate these efforts, the Supreme Council of Water Affairs Management of Afghanistan recently held a three-day Water Resource Management



Water conference participants, including Minister of Energy and Water Mohammed Ismail Khan, discuss sustainable water use.

PHOTO: USAID/Afghanistan



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# PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

July 2009

Conference in Kabul. Organized in partnership with the U.S. Government, the event provided a forum for stakeholders to discuss the opportunities and challenges of sustainable development and water resource management in Afghanistan. In his opening remarks, U.S. Assistant Ambassador Anthony Wayne noted, "The hope of future generations depends, in part, on our ability to manage wisely the precious and limited water resources, not just in Afghanistan, but worldwide."